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ABSTRACT

The persuasive writing program described in this lesson plan introduces grades 3 to 5 students to the basic concepts of lobbying for something that is important to them, making persuasive arguments, and applying the techniques of persuasive oral arguments to independent persuasive writing activities. During the four 40-minute lessons, students will: work in cooperative groups to brainstorm ideas and organize them into a cohesive argument to be presented to the class; discuss the different ways that each group tried to persuade the class; use a guide to help them begin organizing their ideas into written form; write a persuasive piece that expresses points in a clear, logical sequence so the reader can follow their reasoning; and present their persuasive writing pieces. The instructional plan, lists of web and conventional resources, student assessment/reflection activities, and a list of National Council of Teachers of English/International Reading Association (NCTE/IRA) Standards addressed in the lesson are included. One handout and an assessment are attached. (PM)

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# Can You Convince Me?: Developing Persuasive Writing

## Author

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## Grade Band

3-5

## Estimated Lesson Time

Four 40-minute sessions

## Overview

Through a classroom game and resource handouts, students are introduced to the basic concepts of lobbying for something that is important to them (or that they want) and making persuasive arguments. Students become aware of the techniques used in persuasive oral arguments and apply them to independent persuasive writing activities.

## From Theory to Practice

Petit, A., & Soto, E. (2002). Already experts: Showing students how much they know about writing and reading arguments. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy, 45*(8), 674-682.

- Students can discover for themselves how much they already know about constructing persuasive arguments by participating in a nonintimidating exercise.
- Progressing from spoken to written arguments will help students become better readers of persuasive texts.

## Student Objectives

Students will

- Work in cooperative groups to brainstorm ideas and organize them into a cohesive argument to be presented to the class
- Discuss the different ways that each group tried to persuade the class
- Use a guide to help them begin organizing their ideas into written form
- Write a persuasive piece that expresses points in a clear, logical sequence so the reader can follow their reasoning
- Present their persuasive writing pieces

## Resources

- Make a Point! student handout
- Rubric
- Argument and persuasive resources at Web English Teacher
- Chart paper or chalkboard

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## Instructional Plan

### Preparation

1. Print copies of the Make a Point! handout for each student.

2. Visit the Web English Teacher for additional argument and persuasive resources.

### Instruction and Activities

**Session 1: The Game of Persuasion**

1. Ask students if everyone in the room thinks in the same way. Discuss how people have different views about various topics. Give an example by stating your favorite season of the year and asking students about theirs. Discuss how everyone is entitled to his or her own opinion. Ask: Does anyone know the word for trying to convince someone to change his or her mind about something? Elicit from students the word *persuade*.

2. Explain to students that they are going to play a game that will help them understand how persuasive arguments work.

3. Follow these rules of the game:

    - Divide students into teams of four or five, depending on the size of your class.
    - Explain that when you play games the winner gets a reward and at the end of this game the winning team will get _____. (Choose whatever reward you feel will motivate your class.)
    - Have each team choose a recorder, or designate a recorder for each team yourself. The recorder's job is to write down the team's arguments.
    - Tell students that they must work together as a team for 15 to 20 minutes to come up with the best reason why the class should award their group the prize.
    - Use a signal to let them know when to begin and when time is up.
    - Have students present their arguments. Students can either present as a group or choose one person to be their speaker.

**Session 2: Analysis of an Argument**

1. Distribute the Make a Point! handout.

2. Discuss each step with the class, possibly modeling a topic that they can all relate to.

3. Apply the "Themes to Keep in Mind" to the presentations made in the previous session.

**Session 3: Persuasive Writing**

1. Choose one of the following topics (or choose one of your own) for your students to write about, or have them vote for a topic. Remind students to use the Make a Point! handout as their guide in writing their persuasive argument.

    - Should school be year-round?
    - Should we have a class pet?

- Should we have no homework on Fridays?
- Should we take the afternoon off?

2. Have students complete their essay at home if there isn't enough time in class.
3. Give students the opportunity to present their writing.

**Session 4: The Debate**

1. Divide students into two groups for debating purposes. You may let them select a side, or place them on either side if you believe the sides will be uneven. Encourage the two sides to take turns presenting each side of the argument. Each student should contribute one argument to the discussion.
2. Have the class discuss which students were most persuasive and why their tactics worked well.

**Extensions**

- TV or Not TV? This website provides a topic with which students at any level can relate.

  Have students work in pairs on the computer to access the website. Have them follow the site's WebQuest activity that asks them to research the effect of television and guides them in preparing a persuasive Power Point presentation. Have students begin the activity by clicking on the Introduction, and then moving on to the Task and the Process icons, as well as anywhere else on the site that they find necessary.

- Endangered Species: Persuasive Writing This site is a good way to integrate science with persuasive writing.

  Have students pretend that they are a reporter and have to convince people to think the way they do. Have them pick an issue related to endangered species and write a paper trying to convince others of their point of view.

- Have students write persuasive arguments for a special class event, such as an educational field trip, or in-class educational movie. Reward the class by arranging for the class event suggested by one of the essays.

### Student Assessment/Reflections

- Rubric

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## IRA/NCTE Standards

4 - Students adjust their use of spoken, written, and visual language (e.g., conventions, style, vocabulary) to communicate effectively with a variety of audiences and for different purposes.

5 - Students employ a wide range of strategies as they write and use different writing process elements appropriately to communicate with different audiences for a variety of purposes.

12 - Students use spoken, written, and visual language to accomplish their own purposes (e.g., for learning, enjoyment, persuasion, and the exchange of information).

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# Make a Point!

Before writing a persuasive argument, read this sheet for help.

Think of three things you feel very strongly about or would like to see changed. These ideas could be about anything in your life, including your school, home, friends, or neighborhood. Write your ideas in complete sentences.

_____

_____

_____

Choose one of these ideas—one that you would like to continue writing about and can provide specific details about. List reasons to support your opinion on this subject.

_____

_____

_____

_____

How can you get your readers' attention so they are interested in your topic? Write one or two interesting introductory sentences below.

_____

_____

_____

How you can end your persuasive writing piece? Remember, you want to leave the reader as convinced as possible by your ideas.

_____

_____

_____

## Themes to Keep in Mind:

- Audience – Whom are you trying to convince?
- Organization – Keep your ideas in order (beginning, middle, end).
- Big Names – Is there someone you can mention in your speech that your audience can relate to and has heard of?
- Purpose – Why are you writing this in the first place? What are you trying to convince the audience of?
- Definition – Are there words you need to explain because not everyone might have heard them before?
- Examples – What details can you write to make people better understand your point?

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# Persuasive Writing Assessment

**Teacher name:** _____

**Student name:** _____

| CATEGORY | Excellent | Good | Satisfactory | Needs Improvement |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Introduction (Organization) | The introduction is inviting, states the main topic, and previews the structure of the paper. | The introduction clearly states the main topic and previews the structure of the paper, but is not particularly inviting to the reader. | The introduction states the main topic, but does not adequately preview the structure of the paper, nor is it particularly inviting to the reader. | There is no clear introduction of the main topic or structure of the paper. |
| Sequencing (Organization) | Details are placed in a logical order and the way they are presented effectively keeps the interest of the reader. | Details are placed in a logical order, but the way in which they are presented/introduced sometimes makes the writing less interesting. | Some details are not in a logical or expected order, and this distracts the reader. | Many details are not in a logical or expected order. There is little sense that the writing is organized. |
| Conclusion (Organization) | The conclusion is strong and leaves the reader with a feeling that they understand what the writer is arguing for. | The conclusion is recognizable and ties up almost all the loose ends. | The conclusion is recognizable, but does not tie up several loose ends. | There is no clear conclusion. The paper just ends. |
| Accuracy of Facts (Content) | All supporting facts are reported accurately. | Almost all supporting facts are reported accurately. | Most supporting facts are reported accurately. | No facts are reported or most are inaccurately reported. |
| Commitment (Voice) | The writer successfully uses several reasons/appeals to try to show why the reader should care or want to know more about the topic. | The writer successfully uses one or two reasons/appeals to try to show why the reader should care or want to know more about the topic. | The writer attempts to make the reader care about the topic, but is not really successful. | The writer makes no attempt to make the reader care about the topic. |

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